

## **Statewide Data Program Needs Assessment**

### **Water Transfers**

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#### **Program Description**

The Water Transfers Office is the public face of the water transfers program within DWR.

Nancy Quan protects the State Water Project rights.

During the last drought, water transfers were a good idea. DWR developed the drought water bank. The problem was how to establish a price for water? DWR formed the Water Transfers Office, with five people. The intention was to develop a long-term, programmatic approach to water transfers. This approach was requested from the SWP Contractors, as they wanted to expedite water transfers (now and in the future). Half of the Water Transfers Office would be devoted to outreach and long-term planning. The Office was established on the 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, and was part of general management overhead.

After a bit, the SWP Contractors were not happy about the amount of general management overhead, and looked for ways to cut the costs. Much of the Water Transfers Office was put back into SWAPO. The remaining two people, Tom and Al, were asked to work with Bob Niblack and Mary Scruggs, under Chris McCready.

Chris' group needs to prepare two environmental documents (EIR/EIS), one for Phase 8 and one for Water Transfers. There will be some duplication between the two documents. DWR and USBR are the lead agencies on the Phase 8 document. These are long term planning documents and will be contentious.

Tom and Al are doing a giant garter snake study.

**What data do you need for your program to be successful?**

Tom and Al get questions all the time. The Legislature and academics want to know about the total amount of water transferred, from whom to whom (or from where to where).

There is no accounting for the transfers at the end of the year. (Aside, what type of year? Calendar year? Water year? Or something else?) SWAPO only has records of water transfers through the State Water Project. USBR also has records. Sometimes the transfers have to be approved by the State Water Resources Control Board. The SWP Contractors also have water transfer information if they were on one end of the transfer.

Who is the agency responsible for collecting and maintaining water transfer information? Which program is responsible for this? The short answer is no program and no agency is responsible.

The concept of beneficiary pays has defined the Water Transfer Program. Need to identify the beneficiaries, as well as quantify the benefit the organization receives. Chris is working on this.

Right now, the Water Transfer Program is allowing 3.3 acre-feet per acre for rice fallowing. This may be reduced in the future. The exact amount is hard to know. The Program has to consider abatement, and is the rice field properly managed or a non-managed field when it is fallowed?

What are the acreages involved? The USDA Farm Services Agency has one set of land areas for crop insurance. DWR has another set of numbers from its land use surveys and water balances. The Water Transfer Program has a need to determine the boundaries of fields, and have a single, consistent set of numbers.

The Water Transfer Program needs data for ET of crops in different parts of the State. There is a rice water use study (Cold Water Rice Study?) going on right now. The Water Use Efficiency Office and CIMIS wanted the Water Transfer Program to participate in this study. (Did they?) The study has four microclimate stations in Western Canal.

There is a need to store the data from the study somewhere.

In addition to crop water use, there are cultural practices that involve water use. Is there are technical document that contains this information? No.

There are issues of double cropping too.

The Water Transfer Program can glean a lot of information from the County Agricultural Commissioner's reports. But these are gross numbers, and do not necessarily have information at the field level.

In addition to agricultural water use, there is also environmental water use. Protection of headwater and recharge areas is an issue. These lands could be put into a trust, like the Williamson Act land. Some program or agency would need to track the water. Who would be responsible?

The Water Transfer Program could also use a drought index. The idea is to identify where water will be needed for mid- to long-term planning purposes. Abdul Khan is working on sustainability indicators for the California Water Plan. This is a start. How much water will be necessary to sustain an activity?

Tom and Al are working on a CEQA document for the Feather River. This should help part of the Water Transfer Program, but not all of it.

**Do you have the data your program needs?**

No. See the discussion in the previous section.

Who might have data for the giant garter snake study?

**Is data managed in a way that meets your program needs?**

No. No program or agency is responsible for water transfer data management.

**How are you accountable as a program manager?**

Some of the costs of the program need to be borne by SWAPO.

It is hard to fund data collection. You need to demonstrate a need for the data.